

December 18, 2012

Dear Mayor Hovland and Council Members,

Attached please find a petition signed by 65 citizens urging the City to prioritize finding a solution to the excess water problem in the Townes Road natural area, and to take immediate steps to improve the appearance and health of this area.

The draft report prepared by the City recommends no action until a study is performed in 2015, with the possible implementing of solutions in 2017. We believe this is unacceptable for several reasons:

1. In deciding to direct additional storm water to this area, the city's has failed to follow its own management guidelines. The city's wetland inventory identified this area as a Type 7 wooded swamp (Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan, Figure 16-2), and the management guidelines for these areas state that:

*"Special consideration must be given to avoid altering these wetland types.
Inundation must be avoided." (Table 16-2, page 16-6)*

The failure to follow this recommendation has caused the loss of virtually the entire woodland, frequent standing water covered with severe algae blooms, and water inundation on private property.

2. Given the fact that the city's actions caused this problem and the fact that private property is being affected, we do not understand why it is ranked 16th out of 16 water management issues requiring study. This recommendation appears to be based on the assumption that any solution must be implemented at the same time as the 2017 road reconstruction – but the study may show that there is a solution or at least first step that is independent of the roadwork. This study should be prioritized, should be conducted in the near future, and should actively involve affected neighbors.

3. The draft report fails to discuss any short-term solution to the problem. Residents should not have to tolerate a smelly, unattractive area for 5 years. The City's decision has destroyed an entire woodland, which the neighborhood cared enough about to raise private funds to help save from development. The City should take immediate steps – beginning in the winter of 2013 - to improve the current appearance of this area, including

- Removing dead trees and invasive species,
- Planting and improving the boulevard around the natural area,
- Planting trees in the remaining high ground
- Improving the curb, drainage swales, and general appearance of the area for walkers.

This work should be done with the advice of a landscape designer or other specialist in the maintenance of these kinds of areas, and should be done in close cooperation with neighbors.

We recognize that budgetary concerns are an issue, but the City saved a great deal of money when it decided to direct water to this area. Now, it is time to direct some resources to addressing the problems caused by this decision.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

The White Oaks Improvement Association



Petition to the Edina City Council

To the Council:

Prior to 1999, the Townes Road Natural Area was an attractive woodland and was one of the reasons many Edina residents enjoyed walking through the White Oaks Neighborhood.

Since 2000, the decision to re-direct storm water into this woodland has killed almost all the trees, and the area now is frequently filled with stagnant water which is very close to the road. The alternating condition between stagnant water and mud is smelly and extremely unattractive. We are concerned that the water is highly polluted and is an insect breeding ground.

We believe the City Council should prioritize finding a solution to the excess water problem, and should take immediate steps to improve the appearance and health of this natural area.

Signed,

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